

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Poe believed that all aspects of a story should help to focus on a single effect on the reader. Before reading this story, consider the effect that being in a cemetery by yourself at midnight might have on you. What if you suddenly heard an eerie, inexplicable noise?

As you read the story, notice the details Poe gives about the setting and complete the following.

1. "During the whole of a dull, _____, and soundless day in the _____ of the year. . . "
2. "I looked upon the scene before me-- with an utter _____."
3. "Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon _____ in boyhood; but many years have elapsed since our last meeting."
4. How does the narrator hear from Roderick?
5. "The writer spoke of acute bodily illness – of a _____ which oppressed him."
6. What two things do the peasantry think the term "House of Usher" refer to?
7. Describe the room that Roderick Usher is staying in. Capture gothic elements here!
8. "Surely, man had never before so terribly _____, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher....a _____ of complexion, an eye large, liquid, and _____ beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very _____."
9. The narrator is struck by Roderick's excessive nervous agitation. However, he had been prepared for something like this. What had prepared him?
10. "His action was alternately _____ and _____."
11. Roderick describes his illness to the narrator. What are some of the things he is bothered by? (Name at least 3)

12. "He was enchanted by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the _____ he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never _____."
13. Roderick says that the house itself has "brought upon the _____ of his existence."
14. Who is Roderick's only living relative? _____
15. While they speak, this relative walks through the room, apparently unaware of the narrator. The narrator "regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with _____."
16. Madeline's long lasting illness baffled her doctors. She seemed to lose interest in life and physically she would occasionally experience a cataleptical seizure. What does "cataleptical" mean?
17. The narrator has been summoned here to help cheer Roderick. However, after spending time with Roderick, he understood "the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness...poured forth upon all objects...of the universe in one unceasing radiation of _____."
18. To pass the time, what does Roderick do? (Name at least 2 things)
19. What mood is set in stanzas I-IV of "The Haunted Palace"? In stanzas V-VI?
20. What kinds of books did the narrator and Roderick read?
21. When Madeline dies, what does Roderick plan to do with the body? Why?
22. Describe the vault in which the narrator and Roderick place Madeline's coffin.
23. As they gaze on Madeline, the narrator commented on her resemblance to Roderick. What does he tell the narrator?
24. After Madeline's death, how did Roderick change?
25. On the 7th or 8th night after Madeline's death, why couldn't the narrator sleep?

26. Roderick is up roaming the house and goes to the narrator's room. What does he ask the narrator?
27. To pass the time and take their minds off the storm, the narrator begins to read to Roderick. What is he reading?
28. In the story that the narrator is reading, Ethelred beats open a wooden door. What does the narrator hear in the house?
29. In the story that the narrator is reading, the dragon shrieks when Ethelred kills him. What does the narrator hear in the house?
30. How does Roderick react to these sounds?
31. What does Roderick say is causing the sounds in the house?
32. How does Roderick die?
33. The narrator flees from the house out into the storm. A wild light appears behind him so he turns to see what caused it. What does he witness?